

THE ASYLUM

Quarterly Journal of the Numismatic Bibliomania Society

Volume VII, No. 1

Spring, 1989

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NBS news & notes

Financial statement

During the past year we were, at one point, very close to insolvency. The generous donations received from our membership at the NBS meeting held during the ANA convention in Cincinnati and other donations received subsequently, combined with reduced printing and typesetting costs, have put us back in good financial condition. We currently have no debts and our assets are as follows:

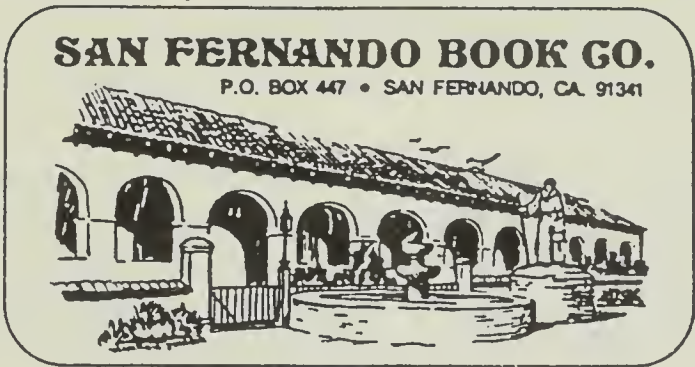
Checking account balance (2/21/89)	\$2855.69
1988 advertising accounts receivable	\$580.00
Subtotal	\$3435.69
Additional membership renewals (anticipated, 50@\$15)	\$750.00
Advertising revenue (anticipated for 1989)	\$2000.00
Total projected capital for 1989	\$6185.69

The approximate cost to produce and deliver *The Asylum* will be:

Printing and miscellaneous	\$550.00
Typesetting and layout	\$400.00
Postage	\$175.00
Times 4 (issues per year)	\$4500.00

By these calculations we will be approximately \$1500 in the black.

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The Asylum

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From the editor

Fair use of copyrighted material seems to be generally misunderstood. The law does not prohibit copying someone else's work; what it does prohibit is unauthorized publication of it. Publication has been broadly defined by the courts to include presenting a work in meetings open to the public or broadcasting it by television or radio. Placing a copyrighted work into a data base accessible to the public would be construed as publishing it. The question of direct profit usually does not enter into the picture; a teacher distributing xerox copies to students *may* be violating the law.

The factors determining fair use include

1. the purpose and character of the use;
 2. the nature of the copyrighted work;
 3. the amount and substantiality of the portion used; and
 4. the effect of the use upon the potential market for or value of the copyrighted work.
- 17 USC 107.

In exchange for copyright protection the person who obtains the copyright agrees that after the copyright expires the work will be in the public domain; that is, anyone will be free to publish the material. It is for this reason that many different publishers can produce new editions of *Vanity Fair* or the King James version of the Bible; they don't have to pay royalties to the author. It is also for this reason that the law requires that the copyright notice be conspicuous and dated.

To the editor

Bob Cochran writes

I have gathered in my short time as a reader of *The Asylum* that many of the members are quite aggressive when it comes to adding to their collections of numismatic literature. I am the same way when it comes to my collecting interests. However, I feel that advertisements for one's collecting interests do not belong in an article meant to share information.

Mr Cochran is objecting to the statement in Remy Bourne's article on rare auction catalogs (Winter 1988), "The items with asterisks are sales that I am missing from my private collection and would like to acquire." He realizes that Mr Bourne has a full page ad in the issue, thinks that the objectionable statement may be innocent but that "the article could have been written in the hope that another NBS member

might offer the missing catalogs." I suppose Mr Cochran was afraid to challenge my article about Das Notgeld, in which I noted which issues I did not have. My apologies to Mr Cochran and other members for the commercial tone of my article.

—Editor.

Jeff Brown writes

This letter is in response to a letter by Leo Guibault (Autumn 1986) and the answer by Charles Davis (Spring 1987). Mr Guibault questions the PRLs and how to find past PRLs. He asks if it would be possible for a dealer to serve as a clearing house for past PRLs. I agree with him that a PRL is necessary for a sale to be complete. Mr Davis indicates that the cost of photocopying would make it difficult for a dealer to break even. He omits an important fact. If he checks the PRL of a Bowers and Ruddy sale he will notice that the item is copyrighted. While I am not sure about copyright law, I am certain that photocopying is not allowed. The information belongs to the cataloger and not to the public. If the public wants the information the public is expected to pay for it. I, for one, have photocopied PRLs consigned to me for fifty cents each, with the understanding that I am not trying to make money, just trying to provide a service for my customers.

What is the answer? I believe that the cataloger could provide reprints of past PRLs. I recommend that the cataloger reprint and package PRLs in groups of years; that is, put all twelve PRLs from 1979 together and sell the group as a set. Since it would be an unplanned source of income, the cataloger could sell the group for a low price, say \$15 a set. This way the dealer is profiting from the information and helping those who collect auction sale catalogs. The question arises of whether it is fair for the dealer to charge \$5 for a PRL just after a sale and later to reduce the price to \$1 or \$2. My answer is yes. The person who uses the information when bidding needed the PRL yesterday and should pay for the prompt service, whereas the person trying to put together a set of Stack's sales with PRLs can wait until the end of the year to receive the PRL of a sale that took place in January.

In conclusion, I agree with Mr Davis that the price structure of the material at the lower end of the spectrum is really jumbled and that the only responsibility of the dealer is to present the material honestly and let the buyer determine what it is worth.

See the discussion of fair use of copyrighted material in the editorial in this issue.

—Editor

Mark A. Atkinson, who has rejoined NBS, requests that members who share his interest in collecting ANA convention sale catalogs correspond with him to share information. Mr Atkinson may be reached at P.O. Box 5343, Vienna, West Virginia 26105.

Leo Guibault, Jr writes

In a recent issue of a popular, well-known house organ (what the NLG terms a commercial publication) I came across a brief mention of an idea that I feel needs to be carefully reviewed. It was stated that Cal Wilson has volunteered to serve as an informal clearing house for dealers in numismatic literature. This was proposed (apparently at the ANA convention) as a means of showing consideration for numismatic bibliomaniacs by spacing sales throughout the year and thus avoiding a feast-or-famine situation. Let me say early on that I am very well aware that if dealers want to orchestrate their sales they can certainly do it without making a public announcement.

I am convinced that those who would participate in this arrangement have the best intentions toward their customers. I am sure this idea was conceived as a useful and considerate device for implementing an orderly market. This is good.

Examine the situation from another point of view. An orderly market may well produce an artificial supply/demand relationship. A moment's careful thought suggests that while an orchestrated market might give us an uncluttered view of available material, it might also reduce competition and thus increase prices.

I have always considered sales which are simultaneous or nearly so to be an economic opportunity rather than a limitation on my access to the market. Is the dealers' problem that closely timed sales reduce prices realized? I would like to hear the views of other members.

Charles Davis writes

You asked me to write about my last few sales and how I see the market in general. During 1988 I conducted three sales, all fixed price. With an average of 2200 items per sale I offered a wide range of material and received instant feedback on what's hot and what's not.

I feel that currently the ratio of numismatic bibliomaniacs to numismatists without such mental instability is very low. Scarce auction catalogs of unimportant sales (such as those necessary to complete series of major dealers), obscure or outdated reference books, and dealers' fixed-price lists no longer command the attention once accorded them. On the other hand, the demand for reference material that will be used in the daily pursuit of knowledge is extraordinary.

Although selling at levels somewhat reduced from those of the early 1980s, there is a constant demand for most classic-period sales rated A by John Adams, although the demand does vary by cataloger. The name sales of Woodward, Strobridge, and the Chapmans are extremely easy to sell, while the same cannot be said of those written by Cogan, Frossard, Low *et al.* B- and C-rated sales unless highly rated in a specific category are largely waiting for a new generation of collect-everything bibliophiles.

In twentieth century catalogs the sales of Thomas Elder seems to parallel those of the Chapmans. Important name or plated sales are wanted, the others not. Mehl and Kagin sales seem to be at the nadir of their cycle, numismatists perhaps frowning on strictly mail-bid sales as being charades. Stack's catalogs, spurred on by the fact that the first four complete sets known were finished only during the past twelve months, are the one exception, with numerous collectors seeking the scarce and insignificant sales.

In my sales the situation is similar with standard references. The classic references I have offered (Browning, Crosby, Maris) have been sold immediately. In the just-out-of-print department, books such as Vlack's *Early American coins*, Sheldon's *Penny whimsy*, Breen's *Encyclopedia of U.S. & colonial proofs*, each available several years ago for \$35, now bring close to \$350 for the three when they are available.

All of this indicates a healthy market demanding full value for the dollar spent. Would that one could say that about the coin market itself. Ω

Pre-1900 fixed price lists and U.S. coppers

by Pete Smith

IN common usage the initials FPL stand for fixed price lists. Remy Bourne believes that they could also stand for forgotten part of literature; there has been little interest in them and they have remained unrecorded. Bourne has a large collection of them and gathers information about items not in his collection.

Bourne's research indicates that FPLs were published in this country at least as early as 1822. He recently let me look through lists from the period between 1859 and 1900 and suggested that I review them from the standpoint of a copper collector and researcher. I shall discuss the contents of the lists and hope the things I found will interest you as much as they did me.

The lists bear the names of familiar nineteenth-century numismatists: the Chapmans, Frossard, Harzfeld, Haseltine, Low, Proskey, and Steigerwalt. Others may not be so familiar: Boysen, Brette, Browinski, Dillingham, Grund, Schmidts, Stutesman. Some appear to have produced a single list and then disappeared from the business.

Many of the early lists have quite brief descriptions, perhaps only denomination, date, and grade. Sometimes the major coin type was indicated; in some cases this was all that was needed. A coin described as a large cent of 1817 with fifteen stars or a half cent of 1828 with twelve stars would be the same variety today as a hundred years ago.

With later lists the descriptions became more extended. The following examples are from Steigerwalt's February 1897 catalog #56:

1793 Wreath. Stem of leaves over 7 and 9 of date. Period between CE.NT. Barely circulated. Beaded milling complete on both sides. Glossy light olive. Handsome. 50.00.

1796 Fillet Head. "High 6 tilted to left." Small 1-100. Fine brown. 3.50.

1801 "Wrinkles before face" variety. Extremely fine, hair barely touched. Strong impression. 15.00.

1817 Top-knot variety. Close date. Uncirculated. Glossy chocolate. 3.00

1804 (Half Cent) Crossed 4. Goatee variety. With stems close 1-200. Edge die break nearly half around reverse, very fine, olive-brown. 2.00.

After reference books were published it became possible to code variety descriptions. The first Maris study of the cents of 1794 was published in 1869. In 1872 the book was offered for sale at fifty cents. Later, when it was out of print, it was offered for one dollar. The Maris numbers were not used in price lists until later. H.E. Morley used them in his January 1892 list. Also in 1892 Frossard offered an uncirculated 1794 Maris #8 for \$10.00. In 1898 Lymon Low listed 1794s by Hayes numbers and Steigerwalt used those and Maris numbers. There was no numbering system yet in use for later cents. I saw only one catalog that used a numbering system for varieties of half cents. In February 1897 Steigerwalt listed six varieties of 1794 half cents by F (Frossard) numbers. Hard times tokens were listed by Low variety and frequently nothing else. I don't recall code-number descriptions of any of the colonial pieces.

The next logical step was to describe coins as "not in Maris." In January 1889 Steigerwalt listed two unpublished varieties of the 1794. One appears to be Hayes 27 (Sheldon 33), very fine, for \$10. The second seems to be Hayes 55 (Sheldon 68), very good to fine, for \$5. In 1898 another unlisted variety, Hayes 57 (Sheldon 50), was offered for \$25 in very good condition.

Most of the terminology used would be familiar to present-day collectors. Coin varieties were identified by terms such as *large date*, *cracked die*, *stemless wreath*, *crosslet 4*, etc. The 1839 cents were identified as *booby head* or *silly head*.^{*} Apparently those descriptions were already understood by collectors.

Some terminology requires a little conversion. What we now call civil war tokens were probably just called war tokens or rebellion tokens. Some ads referred to hard times tokens while others referred to Jackson tokens. One term I did not immediately understand was Louisiana cents. Additional reading led me to realize that those are pieces we now attribute to the French colonies.

Although the grading terms sound familiar they did not mean then what they do now. There was only one uncirculated grade. Most coins were called fair, good, or fine. Some of the later lists used very fine and extremely fine. An October 1894 list (H.E. Morley) defined grades:

^{*} Of course there were three named varieties of the 1839 cent. -Ed.

Fine. Slightly circulated, only minute marks visible to the naked eye.
Good. Worn from usual circulation, all features distinct to normal vision.
Fair. Very much worn, many features indistinct, date however visible.
Very poor. Nothing left. Fit for the junk box.

Unlike present times, there was very little discussion of grading. There was little market for worn coins.

The condition census would be formalized by Sheldon but the concept was there earlier. Steigerwalt's list 12 of January 1889 contained an 1806 uncirculated cent described as probably finest known. It was priced at \$100 at a time when a very fine chain cent listed for \$20 and an uncirculated 1820 cent, brilliant red, could be had for fifty cents. Quality was already becoming expensive.

The earliest price lists had no illustrations. After 1875 many lists used line drawings taken without credit from Crosby's *Early coins of America*. An 1894 premium list issued by New York Coin and Stamp (Proskey) had actual photographic illustrations of some large medals. I did not see a single photograph of an American copper coin in all the price lists I looked at.

Obviously prices were lower in the nineteenth century. A few examples from 1873 should be sufficient: 1794 unc \$15, 1808 unc \$25, 1823 restrike \$.75, 1795 half cent unc \$15, 184X proof half cents \$10. In 1887 a 1796 half cent good \$20, fair \$10. Lots of 100 large cents were offered for \$5.

There is probably little value in an extensive compilation of those prices unless for an examination of the relationship between prices of the same year. In the 1880s when common colonials were selling for \$.50 to \$1 each, the Granby coppers were being offered for from \$20 to \$40. The latter would be cheap by today's standard but expensive in 1880.

An S.K. Harzfeld list of 1879 had this offer:

"Complete Set of United States Copper Cents from 1793 to 1857 including all the rare dates 1793, 1799, 1804 &c. From poor to fine. Very desirable Set at only \$25 the set. (Better Sets in proportion)"

If this was too expensive, there were ways to get a set for less. An 1880 Harzfeld list had this offer:

Complete set of U.S. Copper Cents from 1793 to 1857. The 1793,

1799, 1804 and 1809 skilful, solid electro. copies from finest specimens known; the other dates warranted genuine. fair to very good, all dates show distinctly. Desirable. The set only \$6."

Harzfeld also offered electrotypes individually. From the same 1880 list:

Electro copy of an uncirculated 1793 wreath cent	50 cents
Electro copy of the finest known 1795 Jefferson head	50 cents

Electros of the 1799, 1804 and 1809 cents and the 1796 half cent were also 50 cents each.

An A.B. Sage & Co list from June 1859 had two listings for 1799 cents. The comparative values are interesting:

Cent 1799 very rare	\$ 2.50
Cent 1799 altered- very finely done	1.50

The Randall hoard had its impact on coin prices. Here are a few lines from a Massamora & Co. list of October 1887:

	Fine	Good	Fair
1816 perfect die	1.00	.50	.25
1816 stars connected with beak[sic] in die	.50	.25	.20
1818 perfect die	1.50	.35	.10
1818 stars connected	.50	.15	.05
1820 perfect die	4.00	.50	.10
1820 stars connected	.50	.15	.05

The varieties with the die break were more likely to be from the Randall hoard. It is interesting that these were considered to be less valuable and that this price difference extended to the lowest graded pieces.

The 1854 pattern cent appeared in price lists as early as 1859, when it was offered for \$3. In 1873 a Haseltine list had 1854 pattern cents listed at \$.75 to 1.25. As late as 1895 an H.E. Morley price list offered an 1854 proof cent for \$5 or less. An 1894 buying list from David Proskey had the silver-cent pattern listed at \$5 to \$15. Birch cents were wanted at \$10 to 20. The 1894 buying price for a Brasher doubloon was \$50 to 125. Within a couple of years the buying price doubled. Of course we do not know whether coins were actually purchased at these prices.

Many of the price lists give the price for a date and grade but were not an indication of the actual stock of the dealer. Although in many cases the dealer may have had duplicates, it is unlikely that the rare varieties

were in stock. An example is the Massamore price list of October 1887 that included a 1793 clover leaf cent, unpriced. The ambiguous nature of these lists limits their research value.

Some lists were published for more than one dealer; the covers would be different but the contents identical. There are also many examples of sections or paragraphs being copied from one list to another. Identical lists were produced for Wm. P. Brown and H.G. Sampson, both of New York City, ca 1880. Each offered the pattern 1792 eagle-on-globe cent for \$5. In April 1895 Morey offered the same pattern, uncirculated, for \$3. The 1894 premium list for New York Stamp and Coin (David Proskey) listed a buying price for this coin at \$5 to \$15. It is unknown whether any of these lists resulted in an actual transaction. At the present time only four examples of this pattern are known, two copper and two white metal.

H.E. Morey included comments with his price lists. His April 1894 issue (#10) had an article on fugio cents. His January 1895 issue (#14) contained a long story about a man attempting to buy an 1804 cent from an old lady, ultimately paying \$5. This is an indication of a trend to include more information and to produce more interesting lists. Some price lists came with commentary and some commentary included offers of coins for sale. The line between price list and newsletter was becoming less distinct.

Included with FPLs were buying, or premium, lists. They were frequently sold by dealers for from ten to twenty five cents. Some suggested that people could use them to help avoid counterfeits, publishing lists of dates when various denominations were produced. One purpose of these lists was to indicate current buying prices. A second purpose was to advise people about which coins were worth pulling out of circulation. They were frequently used to promote the hobby of numismatics and to promote the service of the dealer issuing them.

The Numismatic Bank (Boston) issued a premium list promoting the profits that could be made in numismatics. It published a reprint from The State Gazette, Trenton, N.J. of 30 April 1891:

"Peter Mahon, of Orange, is the proud possessor of a cent of the date of 1804, the value of which is something like \$1,200. About three years ago, W. W. Jacobs, of East Orange, broke ground on Main Street for a three story building, opposite Prospect Street, where the People's Bank is now located. One of the laborers employed on the place found a coin among the dirt, which being cleaned proved to

be a cent in a first-class state of preservation, of the date 1804. This is the one now in the possession of Mr. Mahon. He bought it of the laborer for fifty cents, but did not learn of its value until later."

It is interesting that a coin which had been buried and cleaned was estimated to be worth \$1,200 at a time when Numismatic Bank was offering to buy at \$1 to 25. Another story from the same circular:

"Dr. Edward Walther, of St. Paul, Minn., recently discovered one of the very few silver dollars of the year 1804 in the possession of an old Norwegian living in the southern portion of Minnesota and purchased the coin of him for \$150."

I could not find this reference listed in *The fantastic 1804 dollar*.

These dealers were not promoting the investment potential of MS-64 silver dollars or commemorative halves; they were promoting 1804 cents and silver dollars. The items have changed, the methods have changed, but the methods of doing business may be much the same. There were good dealers and bad dealers, interesting lists and boring lists. I found the Steigerwalt catalogs to be the most interesting. They frequently had extensive lists of cents with good descriptions. Many high grade, uncirculated, and proof pieces were listed. Steigerwalt's descriptions are detailed enough to give some feeling for the quality of the coins offered.

One of the large offerings of cents was his sale #57 of 1898. It had a long series of 1794s with 43 different Maris numbers, including Maris 12 (Sheldon 24) uncirculated for \$25 and Maris 15 (Sheldon 26) uncirculated for \$40. There were more than thirteen pages of large cents and two pages of half cents.

Collections of coppers by die variety were being formed during this period. The price lists offered some help for collectors then, although from our modern perspective lists of unpictured, unattributed coins may appear to be of little value. These series had not reached the level of popularity they now enjoy. Other series had greater popularity and availability. Civil war tokens and Confederate paper currency were available in quantity. Colonial, continental, and fractional paper currency were offered. There were ads for centennial medals after 1876 and Columbus medals after 1892. For these items the lists of this period might be considered prime research material.

It appears that fixed price lists of this period are quite rare. There appear to be few serious collectors. Both supply and demand are low.

I found the group I reviewed to be of considerable interest as curiosities but of limited research value. Most copper collectors would probably have no reason to collect or study them. For others it might be appropriate to explore a few of the lists. Perhaps my review will encourage an interest in this nearly forgotten area of numismatic literature.

Help wanted

THE famous book by Wolff Stürmer (*Verzeichnts der Gepräge der grossen und kleinen Münzsorten...*) which was published in 1572 and which is considered to be the earliest numismatic book printed in German seems to have a little brother. I recently bought a ninety-page book measuring only 15 X 9 cm which contains, apart from the woodcuts of about three hundred talers and goldgulden, only a few printed pages. According to the first page of the second part (covering the goldgulden) the book must have been printed in the same year as Stürmer's.

Just like Stürmer's, this book was intended for merchants and other people who needed illustrations and sound information about the coins circulating in Europe. Later, possibly in the 18th century, somebody used my copy of the book as a catalog for his coin collection, marking the coins he had and correcting some mistakes in the book.

Unfortunately my book lacks the title page and so I do not know either the title, the author, or the place of issue (most probably a city in southern Germany). Can any member of our society help? I would be very glad to get a xerox of the title page. Of course any other information would also be of interest to

Reinhold Jordan, Freitagstrasse 32, D-872 Schweinfurt, West Germany.



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 welchen nicht alles Gold so wol bekandt ist / dar-
 durch derselben vil betrogen / vñd andere von jnen
 wider betrogen werden / von wegen der verpotte-
 nen / vñd andere Niederlendischen Gulden / welche
 an ihrem Halt gegen den Rheinischen zu gering
 sindt / So offtmals vñter die guten Rheinischen
 Gulden gemischt / oder sonst für Rheinische Gulden
 empfangen / oder außgeben werden / Also / das im-
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 fluchens / Gottselesterung vñnd Feindschafft ent-
 springt / Wie dan vor Augen teglich gesehen wird.
 Darumb aber solches zu fürkosten vñd zu ver-
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 zusamen zubringen / Als möglich ist /
 Abzuconterfeyen / Vñnd inn
 Druck zugeben / Wie her-
 nach volgt / 16.

1572.



Census of early *Numismatists*

by Ken Lowe

THE centerpiece of a truly prestigious library of American numismatic literature is a complete, original set of *The Numismatist* from its inception in 1888. For a variety of reasons no component of American numismatic literature generates more excitement in a sale than a set of *The Numismatist*. Second, Dr Heath created the American Numismatic Association through its pages. Third, each issue of the first six volumes, the key to the series, was printed by Dr Heath on his manual printing press. Finally, most of the complete sets have distinguished pedigrees.

Volume three contains the actual birth of the ANA. In the February 1891 issue Dr Heath asked, "What's the matter with having an *American Numismatic Association*? would it be profitable? would it be practicable?" This is the first printed mention anywhere of an American Numismatic Association. On page 22 of the next issue (February/March 1891) is an entire page: "A Plea for An American Numismatic Association." Subsequent issues contained copies of letters which Heath received supporting his idea. In the July 1-15, 1891 issue Heath nominated a slate of officers, a board of trustees, and a board of temporary organization. Finally, Heath's accounts in the December 1891 issue established the ANA as a *fait accompli*.

How rare are the early issues? In an article in *The Numismatist* of July 1932 by Dr Heath's son George it is stated, "there never will be known how many of each of the first six volumes were printed and mailed" (p 446). It is estimated that Heath printed between 350 and 500 of each of the pre-1894 issues although the ANA had fewer than 100 members in the early years. The surplus copies were mailed singly as samples to collectors. George added, "I estimate that there were not more than 100 of each of the first four volumes, and possibly a few more of the next two" (p 446). In 1927 only seven complete sets were known. The last sixty years have seen only four or five more appear.

The known sets are these:

1. John Adams
2. Harry Bass
3. Remy Bourne
4. Armand Champa- the Andrew Zabriskie set, sold in the Henry Chapman sale of 1909 and purchased by Farran Zerbe. Later sold to Louis Werner, it is considered the finest set known.

5. John Ford- the Hiram Deats set. Deats, elected to the ANA Board of Trustees at the annual meeting in 1893, held membership number 36.

6. Dan Hamelberg- from Pierre Tremblay (ANA member 112), in Abe Kosoff's Gutttag Collection sale in 1940 to Sol Kaplan, in Mehl's 1947 Neil sale to Steve Bibler, from Byron Johnson's estate in Bowers and Merena's Silberman Collection sale on 16 November 1988.

7. Eric Newman

8. John Pittman- his early volumes belonged to John F. Jones, ANA member 9.

9. American Numismatic Association- Dr George Heath's set, then Farran Zerbe's. When Zerbe bought set 4 he sold this set to W.W.C. Wilson, who left it to the ANA.

10. American Numismatic Society.

11. The Perlmutter copy- sold in Jess Peters' Ray Byrne sale, 1975, present whereabouts unknown.

12. A set was sold in Europe, perhaps #11 again.

13. A set was assembled by Max Mehl and donated to the ANA in 1924. It disappeared in the mail en route to Jack Ogilvie, ANA historian, in the 1950s.

It may be noted that Armand Champa lacks only vol. 1, #1 and 2 of having a second set. John Pittman and Remy Bourne each lack a few numbers of early issues for their second sets. When completed they will be able to show obverse and reverse. (The above information is from Armand Champa and Remy Bourne.)

I believe that even though a few public and private libraries may have partial sets and although previously unknown volumes occasionally turn up, it is probable that no more than four more complete sets will be assembled in the next twenty-five years.

The above article is reprinted with permission from the 13 March 1989 5th Mail bid sale of numismatic literature of The Money Tree, p 3. Ω

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The printer's devil

by Joel Orosz

I was trained as a professional historian; my doctorate was earned in the field of American social history. (Don't stop reading yet; it gets better.) I decided to write my dissertation on the history of museums in the United States before the Civil War and chose eleven of them as case studies. As I slogged my way through piles of manuscripts I found that in nine of the eleven cases the people who founded these pioneer institutions did not record their actions. I spent months attempting to piece together, often on insufficient evidence, the stories that any of them could have related effortlessly over tea and crumpets by the fire. I wish I had a nickel (1913 liberty of course) for every time I cursed those ahistorical museum makers. "Fine lot of historians they were," I would fume, "didn't even care about their own records."

What have these curses muttered years ago over manuscripts to do with numismatic literature? We numismatic bibliomaniacs are guilty of the same sin as the museum makers. As we approach the tenth anniversary of the founding of the Numismatic Bibliomania Society we have no history of our society or our journal, no record of the birth and early years.

"So what," you say. "If I don't know how it all happened I'll just have to ask Jack Collins or George Kolbe." True, most of those who were present at the creation are still alive. But the time will come when these young men will be called to their reward. Leaving aside for the moment the question of whether life will be worth living when Kolbe catalogs no longer arrive, I ask who will be left to tell the story then? I suppose some student slogging his way through piles of manuscripts.

We can certainly do better than to leave it to some student. Now is the time to gather reminiscences, while our founders are still sound of mind [Joel is sometimes careless with words. -Ed.] and body. Therefore I have a modest proposal. First, I ask every founder of our society and journal to write or record his version of how it happened. Second, these accounts should be sent me. Third, I shall use them and follow-up contacts to write our ten-year history.

Now you might ask, "Didn't this guy recently resign as editor because he was overburdened with work?" I was finding it almost impossible to produce four 32-page issues a year, but I think I can write a history of ten pages or so within two years.

What do you think? Is this a good idea? Should I do it or is there a better candidate? Will the founding fathers be ready to help? I want to do it. A group like ours needs tradition, a collective memory, particularly since our meetings are infrequent and our members scattered all over the world. Let me know what you think—vox bibliomaniacorum, vox Dei.Ω

Ormsby's bank note engraving

by Robert Wester

[See Mr Wester's article about this book and man in this journal, Vol. III, No. 1, pp 4-8. -Ed.]

IT appears that my recent census of American numismatic classics is complete as far as Ormsby is concerned.

Prior to my census eight copies were known, one belonging to Cornell C. Hunter and another to Dr Charles French, the famous large-cent collector, and President Franklin Pierce.

Dr Miles Raisig, numismatic researcher and bibliophile, located seven additional copies in the *National union catalog*. Ormsby's book is also part of the American Culture Microfile Series, Reel 627.10. A sixteenth copy (in its original leather binding) was recently located in the New Hampshire Historical Society collection, and I learned of two more copies at the ANA convention last July.

By further research I have learned of Waterman Ormsby's assistance to Morse and Munson in formulating the Morse code. Ormsby also aided Munson in transmitting messages at the first public exhibition of the telegraph in New York City.

Ormsby's son, Waterman Lilly Ormsby, Jr., born in 1834, was a special correspondent for *The New York Herald*. He was the only through passenger on the first westbound stagecoach. He graphically described the country from St. Louis to San Francisco.

Further research of Ormsby might well be performed in New York; Ormsby lived in Brooklyn and his obituary and even perhaps his photograph should appear in the 2 November 1883 issue of *The New York Sun*. Ω

Book prices uncurrent

ONE of the great book sales of the past took place in 1812. John, Duke of Roxburghe, collected books in many fields, but his main interest was early English poetry. When his ten-thousand-title collection was sold in 1812 it was fought over by the surviving great book collectors of the day. The high point of the sale was the unique perfect copy of Boccaccio's *Decamerone*, the first edition, printed by Valdarfer in Venice in 1471. His Grace had paid one hundred guineas for the book; at the sale it was knocked down to the Marquis of Blandford for £2260 after spirited bidding by Lord Spencer. (For comparison, a copy of the Shakespeare first folio brought £100.)

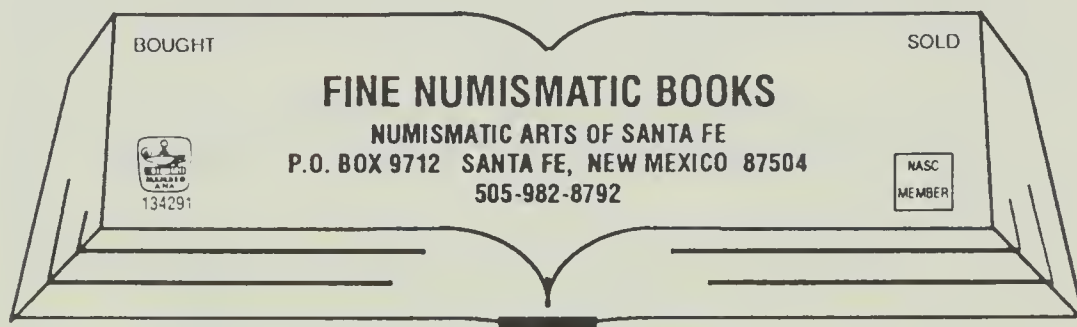
This event may be what started the anecdote about the young collector outbid by an older man. After the sale the young man said to the older, "That's alright; I'll buy it at your sale." And in fact Lord Spencer bought the Boccaccio in 1819, when Blandford (now 5th Duke of Marlborough) was forced to sell his library, at a price variously reported by Wm Fletcher in *English book collectors* at £750 and £918.75. (Lord Spencer's books were bought by the widow of a Manchester industrialist in 1892 and presented to Manchester as the Rylands Library.) The lesson to be drawn from this is that a single sale at a record price may be the result of two rich and stubborn collectors' competition.

The following is a listing of numismatic books in that sale, together with the prices they brought. There was no ten percent buyer's fee.

1511 J. Sambuci Romanorum Principum Effigies, 8vo. Argent.	3/6
1522 Budaei de Asse et partibus ejus, 4to. Venet.	11s
1554 Vici Caesaris Imaginum. 4to. Permae.	3/6
1555 Discorsi del Enea Vico sopra le Medaglie degli Antichi, 4to. Vineg.	6d
1556 Aeneae Vici Reliquae Augustarum Imagines, 4to.	2s
1557 Imagines de gl'Imperatori di Goltz, fol. Anv.	9/6
1557 Le Image delli Donne Auguste di Vico, 4to. Venet.	5s
1563 Goltzii Historia Imperat. Roman. ex Antiq. Numismat. 2 vol. fol. Bruges.	5s
1579 Discours sur les Medailles Antiques par Le Pois, 4to. rar. Paris.	£1 5s
1587 Dialogos de Medallas por Ant. Augustini, 4to. Lib. muy rara. Tarragona.	£5 15s 6d
1605 Waseri de Antiquis Numis Hebraeorum, 4to. Tiguri.	2s
1612 Almoneda de los Reynos de Espana por Salazar, 8vo. Paris.	£1 6s
1619 Aeneae Vici Comment. Imp. Roman. Num. cum fig. 4to. Paris. + Discorsi di Enea Vico sopra le Medaglie de gli Antichi, ib. 1619.	5s
1619 Salmasii Explicatio Inscriptionum Herodis Attici et Regillae	

Conjugis, 4to. Lut.	4s
1627 Discours sur les Medailles Antiques par Savot , 4to. Paris	9/6
1627 Hemelarii Imperat. Roman. Num. Aurea, 4to. Ant.	12s
1636 La France Metallique par Jacques de Bie , fol. Paris.	5s
1656 Chifletii de Othonibus Aereis et de Antiq. Numism. 4to. Ant.	2/6
1666 Recherches des Monoyes de France par C. Bouteroue , fol. rare Paris.	£3
1671 Spanheimi de Praestantia et Usu Num. Antiq. 4to. Amst.	3s
1676 G. Thülemarii de variis Siclis et Talentis Hebraeorum, 12mo. Erfurti	5/6
1681 Vaillant Historia Regum Syriae, 4to. Paris.	16s
1682 Suite des Medailles du Cabinet du Roi gravee en 1682, fol.	£1 4s
1684 Rainssant sur douze Medailles de Domitien, 4to. Vers.	6d
1685 Dan. Majoris de Nummis Graece inscriptis, 4to. Kiliae	7s
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1692 J.G. Pfennigk de Rei numariae mutatione, 8vo. Lips.	2s
1692 Jobert La Science des Medailles, 12mo. Paris.	2/6
1693 Harduini de Nummis Herodiadum, 4to. Paris	12s
1694 ff. Medaglie del Museo Farnese di Padre Paolo Pedrusi , 7 vol. fol. Maroc. Parma	£4
1694 Joh. Chris. Olearii isagoge ad Numophylacium Bracteatorum, 4to. Jenae	1s
1694 Weidneri et aliorum Opuscula de Re Numismat. 4to. Jenae	17/6
1695 Landi Numismata, 4to. Lugd. Bat.	2s
1700 Vaillant Numismata Imp. fol. cum fig. Amst.	5s
1701 Vaillant Historia Ptolemaeorum, fol. Amst.	£1 1s
1702 Medailles de Louis le Grand, fol. Paris.	£3 7s
1702 Medailles sur le Regne de Louis Le Grand, 4to. Paris.	£1 9s
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